

DISPLAYS

FAQ

Q Why do I lose the sides of my Windows desktop when I use my HD TV's digital connection?

A Overscan is the most likely culprit. This is a legacy of the days when everyone used CRT screens. Image placement wasn't consistent on older CRT TVs, so different sets showed different amounts of the image area. To compensate, programme makers added an overscan area. This is an extra amount of the image around each side to prevent black bars appearing due to misplacement.

HD TVs and projectors can place images perfectly, but they are still set to accommodate overscan in broadcast and video images, which may mean that you lose a small portion of the Windows desktop. Sometimes, you can fix this by adjusting the overscan setting in your display's onscreen menu. Unfortunately, some manufacturers don't provide this option, so you may be stuck with the problem.

Lynley Oram

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mitsubishi HC4900

★★★★★

£1,334 inc VAT
From www.office-online.co.uk

We've waited a long time for 1080p projectors to fall in price, and at last it has happened. Mitsubishi's HC4900 is the first relatively affordable full HD model to arrive and costs £1,334 inc VAT. This is still much more than you'd pay for a budget 720p home cinema projector; BenQ's W500 (see Also Consider below) is less than half the price.

The 1080p resolution is a real step up in image clarity. We could see individual hairs on the back of an actor's neck, and straight edges were crisper than those on a 720p image projected at the same size. We played a 1080p video through the HC4900 and Mitsubishi's 720p HC1100, projecting a 70in diagonal with each. Interestingly, only half of our 14 test viewers claimed to be able to detect the extra detail in the 1080p image at this size from normal viewing distances.

The focus and 1.6x zoom are motorised and can be adjusted from the remote control, which makes the HC4900 ideal for ceiling mounting. It also has lens shift, which lets you move the projected image left, right, up and down. There's no keystone correction, but as this degrades image quality, it's better to have a lens shift of five per cent horizontal and 75 per cent vertical, which provides flexibility on the placement of the projector. The remote control has three programmable buttons and, usefully, a separate button for each input. A red backlight illuminates the buttons in a darkened room.

As the HC4900 has only 1,000 ANSI lumens to play with, you may need to draw the curtains and turn off the lights to get the best out of it. Generally, we'd recommend a



brightness of at least 1,200 ANSI lumens or more for viewing in daylight. In low power mode, this was the quietest and coolest-running projector we've seen.

The HC4900 uses a trio of LCDs – one for each primary colour – and a dynamic iris. It has a contrast ratio of 7,500:1, which is higher than the W500's 5,000:1, but lower than that of its predecessor, the HC5000, which had 10,000:1. Despite adjusting settings and trying all the iris presets, we couldn't get the HC4900 to produce particularly good blacks, and whites appeared dimmer than the W500's.

Otherwise performance was brilliant, with realistic, rich colours. It's no slouch with standard-definition interlaced material either. Images were sharp with no noise and excellent anti-aliasing for smooth edges.

When connected to a PC by VGA it supports a maximum resolution of just 1,600x1,200, but we got a pin-sharp image at its native 1,920x1,080 through the DVI input after adjusting the overscan (see FAQ).

If you've been waiting for an affordable 1080p projector, the HC4900 is great news and provides lots of extra detail. Only its black level might disappoint, but if you can live with that, it's a bargain.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Sharp 1080p images
- ✓ Quiet; generates little heat
- ✗ Mediocre black level

HOME CINEMA LCD PROJECTOR
1,920x1,080 native resolution, 7,500:1 contrast ratio, 1,000 ANSI lumens, VGA, DVI, 1x HDMI, component, composite, S-video
PART CODE HC4900
DETAILS www.mitsubishi.co.uk

Also consider...

iiyama ProLite X486S-B1

★★★★★

£189 inc VAT
From www.oyyy.co.uk

BEST BUY The ProLite X486S-B1 screen's glossy coating makes colours look richer, and the 400cd/m² backlight helps overcome unwelcome reflections. It performs beautifully whether you're editing a spreadsheet or playing a game. Images are sharp, colours are vibrant and skin tones realistic. This LCD is excellent value.



19in LCD 1,280x1,024 native resolution, 700:1 contrast ratio, 2ms response time (black-to-black), VGA, DVI, one-port USB2 hub PART CODE X486SB1
DETAILS www.iiyama.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Feb 2007

HANNSG HW223DP

★★★★★

£187 inc VAT
From <http://digiuk.com>

BEST BUY The HW223DP's brushed-silver surround and black stand look classy. The display supports HDCP, so it's great for HD video. An included adaptor allows a component video source to connect to the DVI input. It produces a clear, sharp image using both VGA and DVI inputs, with colours that look rich and natural.



22in WIDESCREEN LCD 1,680x1,050 native resolution, VGA, DVI, 3.5mm line-in connectors, four-port USB2 hub, 5ms response time, 800:1 contrast ratio
PART CODE HW223DP
DETAILS www.hannsg.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Aug 2007

OPTOMA EP727

★★★★★

£399 inc VAT
From <http://direct.tesco.com>

BEST BUY Optoma's EP727 is a tiny projector that weighs just 2kg. It has an HDCP-compatible DVI input, and can scale 720p and 1080i HD material to its native resolution. Because it uses DLP, there's a slight rainbow effect but colours are accurate and focus is pin sharp. Our dark screen looked properly black, while whites were bright and clean. It's an excellent all-rounder.



OFFICE DLP PROJECTOR 1,024x768 native resolution, 2,200:1 contrast ratio; 2,200 ANSI lumens
PART CODE EP727
DETAILS www.optoma.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Feb 2008

FINLUX 37FLH760

★★

£600 inc VAT

From www.directtvs.co.uk

Finlux's 37FLH760 is the first 1080p LCD TV we've reviewed. At £600 it costs roughly £300 less than most other 37in 1080p models. However, the shiny black surround looks cheap and the whole unit doesn't feel sturdy.

If you have a Blu-ray or HD-DVD player, you can watch HD movies at their native 24 frames per second on this TV. The difference is quite impressive, giving a more cinematic feel and creating more distinct, crisply defined images. Even if your 1080p source doesn't have this setting you won't be disappointed. Fine detail was accurately reproduced in even the darkest areas of images.

Unfortunately, colours were garish and oversaturated whichever source was connected to the TV. Red was a particular problem, giving skin tones a sunburnt look. Sadly, it's not possible to change the red, blue and green colours individually. The best we could do was to enable cinema mode and set the colour temperature to cool.

The 37FLH760 can receive analogue stations as well as Freeview digital channels. Image quality on the digital channels wasn't as sharp as on other TVs we've seen. The seven-day EPG looks unappealing and is clunky to use.

The highest resolution available when connected to a PC through VGA is 1,360x768. Despite adjusting the clock and phase we couldn't get a sharp picture, and movement across the pixels made still images shimmer. Using an HDMI-to-DVI



cable to connect to a PC improved matters. We were able to connect at the TV's native resolution of 1,920x1,080 and the shimmering effect disappeared. However, picture quality was still poor, and text had a ragged appearance. Also, we lost the outside edges of the Windows desktop to overscan (see FAQ, left). Sadly, there is no setting in the sparse onscreen menu to adjust this.

Anti-aliasing is a particular problem for the 37FLH760. Straight edges appeared jagged and had a smeared appearance when the image was moving. The 37FLH760 struggled with our standard-definition interlaced video, too. Despite

setting noise reduction to high, solid areas of colour looked particularly speckled.

If you have devices that can output 1080i or 1080p and want the extra fine detail that 1080p provides, the Finlux will give it to you. However, with oversaturated colours and a poor performance in all other areas, the 37FLH760 is not a good buy.

Lynley Oram

SUMMARY

- ✓ Supports 24 frames per second
- ✗ Poor colour and anti-aliasing
- ✗ Not much good for PC use

37IN LCD TV 1,920x1,080 resolution, 2,000:1 contrast ratio, 2x HDMI, VGA, component, 2x SCART, hybrid digital/analogue tuner
PART CODE 37FLH760
DETAILS www.finlux.eu

CHOOSING A... Projector

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

NATIVE RESOLUTION: 1,024x768

BRIGHTNESS: 1,000 ANSI lumens

CONTRAST RATIO: 500:1

LAMP LIFE: 2,000 hours

CHECK: Weight, throw distance, noise

Recommended minimum in grey

1 Low-cost projectors make two main sacrifices. The brightness, measured in ANSI lumens, will be relatively low and the native resolution will be limited to 1,024x768. Neither need be serious drawbacks if you want to use your projector for presentations or DVDs.

If you want to be ready for High Definition video, though, you'll need a projector with a resolution of at least 1,280x720 and either an HDMI port or HDCP-compliant DVI port.

2 Image quality is obviously important, but this is hard to assess from specifications alone. A high contrast ratio (over 500:1) adds depth to the picture and is usually a benefit of digital light processing (DLP) projectors rather than those using LCD technology. The quality of the optics and colour balance cannot be gauged without consulting a review, though.

3 Consider where you'll be using your projector; size and weight are important if the unit will be moved around a lot. You should aim for under 3kg if portability is an issue. Small rooms demand a quiet (sub-33dB) projector and a flexible throw distance; this tells you how close or far away the screen can be. Almost all projectors can mirror or rotate their image to cope with ceiling mounting or rear projection.

4 Check that the projector can cope with all the signals you might want to feed it. Common video formats are supported by almost all projectors, but high-resolution VGA signals and HDMI may not be. Highly detailed images will display at their best only on pricier projectors with a high-definition resolution.

5 The brightness of the projector will depend on where you need to use it. Projectors with 1,000 ANSI lumens are fine for darkened rooms, but for meeting rooms you should get a minimum of 1,300 ANSI lumens. Remember brighter projectors will cost more to run as their bulbs need replacing more often. An ECO mode increases bulb life but reduces the brightness of the projector.

BENQ W500

★★★★★

£682 inc VAT

From www.europc.co.uk

BEST BUY BenQ's W500 widescreen 720p LCD projector is great quality and very quiet. When connected digitally to a PC, it displayed a crisp Windows desktop. The quality of standard-definition clips blew us away, and it handled HD movie clips with ease, producing rich colours and plenty of detail. The W500 provides a good range of features and great image quality at a reasonable price.



HOME CINEMA LCD PROJECTOR
1,280x720 native resolution, 5,000:1 contrast ratio, 1,100 ANSI lumens
PART CODE 9J.J2K77.B5E
FULL REVIEW Feb 2008

LG 37LC55

★★★★★

£484 inc VAT

From www.soundandvisiononline.com

BEST BUY LG's 37LC55 looks fabulous and has the performance to match. It's great for standard interlaced video but comes into its own when handling high-definition (HD) material and progressive-scan DVDs. Colours are rich and natural, and focus over VGA and DVI is pin-sharp. This is a great TV at a reasonable price.



37in LCD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, VGA, component, 2x SCART, digital tuner
PART CODE 37LC55 DETAILS www.lge.com
FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

TOSHIBA Regza 32C3030

★★★★★

£423 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

BEST BUY Picture quality from HD footage and our progressive-scan DVD was perfect with the 32C3030. Colours were rich and deep, and blacks looked black. This TV puts in a good all-round performance for a very reasonable price.



32in LCD TV 1,366x768 native resolution, 4,000:1 contrast ratio, 2x HDMI, VGA, component, 2x SCART
PART CODE 32C3030
DETAILS www.toshiba.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Nov 2007